COURTESY A LARGE FACTOR IN BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

It Is Well Defined as The Common Sense of Human Relations—Without It The Highest Degree of Success Cannot Be Attained

(James B. Morrow in the Philadelphia Record.)

A brown tract was on every seat in the parlor car. The train was a fast express between Boston and New York. A tall dark-skinned and black-haired man, leisurely and robust—a peering man, with a half-smile on his face—came down the aisle, stopped, glaced at the title of the tract, looked pleased and sat down.

"Common courtesy," he read—first paragraph, first page—"is the business of every man who meets the public in any capacity, be it ever so humble."

"Courtesy,' so began the second paragraph, "becomes part of his trade, to be applied in the face of resistance, the same as it is a part of the carpenter's trade to apply a jack-plane on crossgrained wood, knots and even an occasional nail head."

"An experienced carpenter," the tall man was still reading, "does not get mad and throw his tools out of the window when he strikes cross-grained wood—he simply reverses the action of his tool."

The idea in the last clause of that sentence was cleverly stated and the tall man chuckeled. Often, if he is greatly amused, he cackles.

"We can never make the public better by imitating it," the tract said on page two, and the tall man nodded his head in affirmation.

"Any man," the tract continued, "who comes in contact with the public will meet a lot of mean people.

"Nearly all people are mean at some time.

"But—

"Few people are mean at all times,"

And so on for six beautifully printed leaves. The tall man laid the tract on the sill of the window and said to his companion: "I couldn't improve the text any, were I to try, though this is the first time I have read it since I wrote it two years ago."

Taught Railroads Salesmanship

The tall man was David Gibson, scientific salesman, poet, philosopher, humorist, architect, story-teller and editor of 30 magazines. Originally the tract was an editorial dealing with the human problems which are met by railroad station agents, baggage masters, ticket sellers, brakemen and conductors.

You may have observed that the attitude of railway employee toward the public is very different from what it used to be. David Gibson, in large part, is responsible. His editorial has been reprinted by every large railroad corporation in the United States but one. It has done so much good among railroad men themselves that it is now given to travelers, the theory being that courtesy is reciprocally profitable and obligatory.

"The doctrine of non-resistance" is what David Gibson calls his scheme of getting along happily with the human family. Getting along happily, in David Gibson's scheme of life, is the selling of things, easily and profitably, to the human family—such things as transportation, groceries, dry goods and so forth. Monopoly, he says, has been combative, arrogant and unintelligent. Meanwhile it has been blind to its own permanent interests.

"Mrs. Palmer,' 'he told me, in his drawling, winning way, "boards the train at the railway station in her village. Along comes the conductor, by and by. He is a sour, little man, with a mustache like a lion tamer's and eyeglasses on the end of his nose. He insults Mrs. Palmer, snaps at her and snarls, and Mrs. Palmer goes home and injects hate for railroads into the hearts of all her boys. The boys grow up and become jurors, assessors and legislators. They hear damage cases, fix valuations and pass laws. Sour conductors and fresh ticket agents have cost the stockholders who employ them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"Mr. So and So wants to go from Here to There," and David Gibson marked the stations on the top of the desk with his middle finger. "The railroad says, chopping its jaws together: 'Take our line or hoof it.' That's the attitude. Such salesmanship is a crime against civilization.

Work for the Fool-killer.

"The railroads were a long time finding out—some of them haven't found it out yet—that it is good business to treat every farmer for 10 miles back on either side of the right of way as a neighbor. I know a public service corporation that has actually made a conservative and large city in the Middle West socialistic. If we had a foolkiller in this country he would have more than he could do among what are called our best classes.

"Merchants, large ones, at any rate," David Gibson continued, "learned long ago that in an ordinary dispute the customer is always right. I was in a New York department store recently when I heard a woman say: 'I bought a coffee pot of you for 60 cents. It should have been delivered day before yesterday.' She wasn't cross-examined to see if she were telling the truth or lying. A coffee pot was wrapped up and given her and with it went a politely spoken apology. Her good will, whether she was honest or dishonest, was worth, possibly, a hundred coffee pots.

"Laundry men were about the first business men in the United States to discover the actual cash value of the agents they use as points of contact with the public. Drivers of laundry wagons as a rule are keen, courteous and intelligent young men. They are more than teamsters because they solicit business and collect bills. Mostly, they deal with women and must be pleasant-faced and pleasant-spoken. If you think about it for a moment, you will perceive that they are salesmen.

"Railways touch the public, not through their presidents, directors, managers and share-owners, but through their ticket sellers, often insolent, and their conductors. The doctrine of non-resistance means patience and courtesy and, therefore, efficiency. I teach it and preach it, along with the profitableness of common honesty—the selfishness, I might say, of giving every one a square deal. Honesty, in short, is a business proposition.

"We want an honest carpenter's job or an honest bricklayer's job. These phrases were once commonly heard in small villages. The men who did such jobs prospered. They are prospering now, or their sons are prospering in larger spheres.

A Shoemaker Is His Witness

"The honest shoemaker uses good leather and thread and presently he has a house of his own, with flowers in his front yard and vegetables and fruit trees in his garden. I call in humble persons as witnesses of the value of common honesty, but I can summon bankers and manufacturers and the testimony will be the same. You may say that the business wisdom of common honesty is admitted. Yes, admitted but not always. Yes, admitted but not always accepted. Further preachments are necessary.

"Every one nowadays is harping on the word efficiency. 'Speed up' is the cry along the whole line. New machinery is invented and put to work. New methods are adopted. And all the while the fundamentals of success are overlooked by many business men. A thing is made. The next task is to sell it. Here is where enterprises frequently fail. In the first place, too much is claimed. That is not common honesty and it is mighty bad salesmanship. Poor material is an unseen place is not common honesty. Moreover, the efficiency of machinery, methods and management, paid for at a high price, boasted about, in fact, becomes futile unless it is combined with courtesy, which may be defined as the common sense of human relations.

'A thing is made, I have said, and made with mechanical and financial precision and sagacity. The work is only half done, however, because the thing must now be disposed of to the public. I have spoken of common honesty and courtesy in the great achievements of salesmanship. There is another essential—personality.

"When I was an architect's office boy in Indianapolis I noticed that Walter Kelly, who sold steam-heating furnaces for houses and large buildings, could always get into the presence of my employer. The door flew open when he knocked. Walter Kelly's furnaces were no better than some others, but Walter Kelly never had any difficulty in doing business. My boss would talk to him by the hour. Contractors invited him home for dinner.

"Walter Kelly was an interesting, cheerful man. He knew what was going on in the world and how to put his knowledge into language. Getting an audience was no trouble for him. And seeing one's man is the first essential of practically all successful salesmanship. Walter Kelly was the point of contact between the word out-of-doors and the owners of his factory, who, for all I know, may have been arbitrary, cranky and disagreeable persons.

"When business men realibe that the agents whom they employ to sell their goods are equally as important as the financiers and engineers who produce their goods, more money will be made, less prejudice will exist and fewer laws will be enacted to keep our captains of industry straight. Salesmen know the temper of the people and understand how to deal with the people. If boards of directors would consult them more they would not have need to consult their lawyers so much.

"The gas company in Boston has actually become a popular corporation. Its president once sold tobacco on the road. Salesmanship is no longer just 'putting one over' on the buyers. It is a profession, though many amateurs practice it. I know a local ticket agent on a second-rate railroad who sells more transportation than does his competitor, although the other line has better trains and a smoother track. It is the man, even more than what he has to sell, that counts in the ordinary transactions of life. We all know that it is the personality of the orator, rather than the words he speaks, that lingers in our memories."

With David Gibson himself, the man—unique, imaginative, temperamental, practical—was further capitalized by an idea which, odly enough, was picked up in the street. David Gibson then was a newspaper writer, a skilled contriver of humerous and pathetic articles. At Indianapolis, where his father owned one of the largest flour mills in the Middle West, he had studied rural character around a feed stable patronized by farmers. Some of his later anecdotes were drawn from the same source. For instance:

One of Gibson's Stories

A man returns to his native village after a long absence, David Gibson relates, as solemn as an owl and as pompous as a gobbler, and rides away from the railway station on the seat with the hack driver.

"And what has become of Sid Hank, the town drunkard?" the man inquires, after having gone through the list of former notable residents.

"Oh, he's been dead this long time," the hack driver answers.

'So Sid is dead and buried," the man muses, putting his thoughts into words as men do in such circumstances.

"Dead but not buried,' the hack driver replies, and a smart-aleck glint comes into his eyes.

"Not buried!" the man exclaims.

"Nope," the hack driver says, as he gives the near horse a slap with the lines.

"But what was done with the remains?" the man asks, as it was intended that he should.

"Oh, they just porued 'em back in the jug," the hack driver answers, while he giddaps his team and looks straight ahead.

Presently David Gibson was an expert draftsman and then an architect. He made the first 99-year lease in Indianapolis and the first 4-per cent. loan. Work, worry and a dispute with his employer, who was his brother, sent him into the street, where he met a man. He was to meet another man in the street of another city later on—a man with a big idea he did not understand.

David Gibson began writing experimental editorials, for such was the suggestion he found that day in the streets of his native town. But he had to much style of his own, too much poetry, for controversial and expositive tasks of that kind. So he turned to sketches, to village scenes and conversations between uncouth and whimsical men. That was his work in Cleveland when prosperity came rapping at his door.

"A machine and stamping company," he told me, and from now onward the story will be his own, "making parts for other manufacturers, had printed two issues of a little four-page magazine—a house organ, as it was called. An advertising solicitor who was doing the work halted me in the street one morning and asked me to take the job off his hands.

His Boss Gave Him $20

"The copy for the third issue of the magazine was turned over to me. I carried it home and rewrote it, slipping a paragraph in here and there which I thought might be interesting to business men. When I returned the copy to the manager of the stamping company, he read it through, made some vocal sign that it was satisfactory and handed me a check for $20. I had felt him with the paragraphs and meant to give him more.

"Salesmanship, as I could see, when I thought the subject over, depends pretty largely on presonality. I tried, therefore, to put personality in the next issue of the magazine. My object was to give business men to whom the magazine was sent without cost to themselves something they would like to read, keeping such matter separate from the advertisements. Once a salesman, whether he purposes to make his appeal in person or by the written word, gets directly to the buyer, obtains his notice, in other words, it is his fault if no bargain then or later follows.

"First of all, you understand, an audience is necessary. Newspapers having audiences or subscribers are therefore to the greatest value to advertisers. If they contained nothing but advertisements they would not be read, though they were given away for nothing and even left on one's doorstep. Eight pages were added to the magazine at the fourth issue—the second issue under my editorial management. I filled the additional space with two-line paragraphs and short editorials on business subjects.

"Common honesty, I then said, was the one sure road to financial success. I now own and edit 30 magazines, representing 30 of the largest business corporations in the United States, and I still emphasize the same doctrine, not because it is a moral question, but for the reason that nothing in the world pays so well.

A Great Rule That Pays

"I would therefore advise all dishonest men, workers as well as employers, rich and poor, invariably to do the square thing. I argue the application of the Golden Rule to every detail of life and argue it on the ground that it pays in dollars and cents. Business men should not believe that the Golden Rule is for deacons and elders and the other saints in the Amen Corner—it is for them, whether they are running a bank or a grocery.

"Well, at the end of the first year, the magazine contained 24 pages of reading matter. The advertising was printed only in the front and at the back. The sixteenth issue brought more inquires and orders than were received from the advertisements of the company in 75 of the usual trade and technical publications. I estimated that the magazine had increased the sales of the establishment about 60 per cent.

In the meantime I had been improving our printing and mechanical work, choosing ink and paper for the covers to symbolize the months of the year—green and white for April, green and red for June, orange and purple for October, white and gray for January, and so on. The magazine, coat-pocket size, was seven inches long and four inches wide. I felt now that I had developed an idea and created an institution.

"Then one day a button manufacturer in the East asked for space. I ceased right there to be a hired man. The same editorial matter, I saw, would make any number of separate publications—the names would be different, the things advertised would not be the same, being printed for concerns not competing with one another, but in all other respects the magazines would be alike. Production cost would be brought down. That is the Golden idea, if I may use the phrase, the seed of which I actually picked up in the street. I am called an editor and publisher. As a matter of fact, I am a salesman and nothing else."

Society's Chief Dangers With Its Abnormal Members

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cent. to 80 per cent. self-supporting after the acquisition of the property."

I asked Dr. Hutchinson how he would begin to sift out the suspects for his preventive work if he were placed in control of the New York situation.

"By bringing every child in town under the eye of mental and physical experts," he replied. "Goler of Rochester, who invented milk standards, etc, has devised a plan for getting at the very babies, through milk stations, baby clinics, etc., and thus of looking over the city's human material before it even reaches school.

"This system, carried out in its entirety, would detect every defective, either in mind or body, assuring it of remedy if that were possible, and protecting the community from it if remedy could not be accomplished.

"The idiot can be detected at the age of 2, the imbecile at the age of 5, to 7, the feeble-wit or moron furnishes 90 per cent. of all prostitutes and 75 per cent of all male criminals.

"Proper early study of our population would give us advance control of two-thirds of our criminals, three-fourths of our paupers, seven-eighths of our prostitutes, and a large proportion of our inebriates. That would be the most valuable sort of preventative work, both for them and for society at large.

More Policemen Than Criminals.

"A plan has been devised by means of which, through co-operation between the Board of Health, a census of a certain ward might be taken, with the object of finding out how much of human misery and wrongdoing is due to heredity and how much to environment. We don't even know how many unfits are among our population.

"I think there are in New York not more than two-thirds as many criminals as there are police. It is an interesting question, and its solution would save us lives and money. The actual percentage of criminals in prison is never more than one to every 1,000 of the population, while we have one policeman to every 500 population.

"I should measure and test formental and physical defects every prisoner or person under charges, investigating every history. Him who proved to be 'habitual' I should give over to the State for care. I should cleanse him of his dirt, cure him of his ailments, and put him to work toward the support of himself and his fellow-unfortunates. Sequestered, he would not reproduce his kind. I should go further and investigate his strain, taking into charge his children and his living ancestors if they showed kindred imperfections, as most of them would.

"This would be not with the idea of punishing crime but with the idea of protecting society and the unfortunate himself.

"Intelligently conducted, the search for those likely to become criminal would round up most of the dangerous individuals in New York. Similar work elsewhere would clean the country in a little while, and, cleaning it, woud give it a new impulse toward advance.

"I believe this could be done within a year. An old Alabaman, announcing that he proposed to build a road through a swamp, was told that it could not be done.

"'It sure can,' said he. 'Money are power, and I are got it.'

"So also has New York and the United States as a whole."